

A Monster of a Memory by justareader1120

Series: [Prompt Requests \[2\]](#)

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Genre: Angst, Cute phone calls, F/M, again every character besides mike and el are only mentioned, comforting hugs, stubborn mike loves his supercomm

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Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

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Summary:

Based on another request: "why do you do this to yourself?"

late night phone calls turn to painful reminders and Mike shows El how much she matters to him (even if it means sneaking out in the middle of the night)

A Monster of a Memory

Author's Note:

its angst time again y'all!!

He loved the sound of her laugh.

When they'd first met, it would be a sound he'd be lucky to hear, a sound so faint and fragile he would wonder if he was imagining things.

Over the years, her laugh became a steady stream of giggles and snorts, gentle and pleasant to the ear, radiating the true sunshine and light of her personality.

So yes, Mike Wheeler loved the sound of El Hopper's laugh.

On Saturday nights, the two teens laughed and smiled through the phone into the very unreasonably late hours of the night, growing more and more accustomed to hearing the comforting sound of the other on the line.

It wasn't a fact that made either of their parents very happy. It was often that Karen Wheeler found her son whispering jokes and endearing anecdotes into his bedside phone. Mike didn't even really want the phone in the first place, insisting, even at sixteen, that his Supercomm was enough to communicate with his friends. He'd ultimately and predictably lost out to that argument.

"You aren't twelve anymore Michael! You need to speak into a regular phone like a regular young adult!"

He figured she had a point there.

It was also ideal timing for El to receive a lavender bedside telephone for her sixteenth birthday, chocolate eyes shining up at Mike in excitement and Hopper's glare burning into him as if to say *you kids better not stay up ridiculously late*.

Per to Hopper's prediction, that is exactly what Mike and El did every

single Saturday.

“And then Dustin snorted chocolate milk out of his nose! And it was all over Lucas! It was literally only about three weeks into knowing him.”

They both laughed at the memory of their two best friends silliness when they were so young.

“Was Lucas mad?” El could barely contain what wanted to become loud laughter, and Mike knew she didn’t want to wake her already grumpy dad.

“He was more than mad. He chased Dustin all around the cafeteria for ten minutes. Will and I couldn’t believe they didn’t even get detention.” Mike relayed.

He could hear her sigh on the other line. “I wish I could have known you all when you were so little. It was really lonely...” El whispered wistfully. Mike hurried to change the subject, already knowing where her mind was headed.

“Yeah but we’re all together now, and that’s what matters.” When he could, Mike always tried to keep El from getting too caught up in her past, flooding her with smiles and warm embraces and gentle kisses and distractions. It was to keep from losing her.

But it didn’t always work out the way he planned.

“Yeah,” El sighed again. More importantly than offering distraction, Mike knew he needed to offer her support in every way, even if it meant reliving memories that though they weren’t his, hurt his heart to hear all the same.

“El, it’s okay to talk about. You don’t have to keep it in, I’m right here.”

“I know Mike I just...” she clears her throat “y’know they started making me... kill things when I was really young, I couldn’t have been more than 6 or 7.

“They brought in these mice in cages, and all he told me to do was-

was focus on them, and focus on their eyes.” He knew exactly who she was talking about.

“I hadn’t developed nose bleeds yet but, my head, my head started to hurt *really* badly and then I opened my eyes. And the mice weren’t moving. They were lifeless. And I *did* that, Mike. I cut their lives short.”

“El it wasn’t your choice to do any of that,” Mike tried to intervene. His attempt was unheard.

“There was one mirror, in the bathroom, and I couldn’t even look at myself anymore,” her breath hitches “all I s-saw was a...” It was a term he heard her utter once, and as sure as he was that she wasn’t one then he knew he was going to once again have to convince her that she wasn’t.

“El,” he tried to keep his voice firm. “You aren’t a—“

“I’m a monster, Mike. M-maybe not like the demogorgon but I...” the next part of her sentence comes out as a whisper “I hurt people.”

“I almost killed Lucas, I got Benny killed, I almost went on a murder spree, I put you in danger, I—“ she stopped herself short.

“And I k-keep trying to shake the feeling but I can’t. I... I don’t deserve this, I don’t deserve you, I don’t deserve to be... normal. Not after everything I’ve done.”

Mike was almost speechless, his mind running with arguments and rebuttals and words of comfort but he could only feel one sentence escape his lips.

“Why do you do this to yourself?”

What he heard next made his heart drop down to his stomach.

“Because *that’s* what I deserve.”

He doesn’t even have to listen to the dial tone to know she’s hung up.

As many times as Mike had visited El at the cabin her and her father shared, he had to admit it was difficult to navigate at 2:00 in the morning.

Nancy already perfected the art of sneaking off in the middle of the night to do who knows what, so it wasn't hard for Mike to sneak out of his room and down to the garage to get his bike and ride off into the night without alarming Mr. or Mrs. Wheeler.

I really hope I can see the trip wire when I get there.

He could barely feel his legs moving he was so frantic. How could El think any of that about herself? She's done so much for everyone she knows, she's done so much for him. He didn't know how he was going to be able to tell her any of this. Knock on the front door? As much as Hopper had warmed up to Mike, he knew he would kill him for being there at this hour.

At Denfield, Mike spotted the big oak tree and knew he'd finally reached to where he'd been pedaling for what felt like hours. Walking the required five minutes past the dead end, he wasn't positive, but he thought he spotted a small figure leaning on the Hopper's porch. The figure became clearer as he walked closer, it was El.

He walked clumsily toward her, trying to avoid the trip wire he'd been dreading, managing to narrowly avoid it. *Thank god.*

As he approached her, he finally saw her emotions for what they were, her tear stained face and puffy eyes were all the push he needed to say what he had to next.

"Mike, w-what are you doing here?" Upon hearing the relief beneath the obvious exhaustion of her gentle tone, Mike knew his trek was worth it.

"I-I didn't know if you were awake, but I couldn't sleep knowing you were hurt and I just snuck out and hopped on my bike to tell you how amazing you are." He grabbed both of her hands. "Y-you didn't put me in danger or any of us, you saved everyone, all of us. You saved me El I... I'm a different person because I know you. I'm better

because I get to be with someone so, so strong and brave. I am so lucky to love you, and you can't tell me that any of those things make you a monster."

There was a beat, and for a moment Mike feared that El would argue with him, give him more reasons why she was undeserving, or even shoo him away.

But then she's bursting into tears, and practically collapsing into his arms. Her arms are wrapped tightly around his waist as he holds her to him and strokes her hair softly.

"I-I'm s-sorry," She says in between sobs, and Mike almost doesn't catch it.

"You have *nothing* to be sorry for."

As he held her closer and listened to her cry, he hoped that one day, she would truly believe that.

Author's Note:

this was fun!! again im @lets-engage on tumblr!